6/27/72

Dear Mary and,

Your call was a shock. Sorry as I am to hear the bad news, I do appreciate your making the expenditure. I hope you realize my letter was not addressed to you but a reflection of a very bad situation I can't tell you in full partly because the miserable thing is too long and partly because some of it I must keep in confidence. If I can get this restriction released, I think you'll learn things about people.

It is quite possible that Bob Smith told me what I should have taken as his special way of saying what really happened. He did not phone me. I was in the CTIA office one day to see Jim, the only reason I ever go there. It was after he had been to Dallas, because my recollection of our conversation about Arch is clear. Bob, whether or he not he intends it, has his own special kind of arrogance, positiveness and diffidence about some matters that I avoid him as much as I can. He turns me off and I think he has wasted a fortune in time. I am certain he told me you had some trouble, but I am also certain that I did not carry away anything like a representation of the seriousness of it or its permanence. I thought it happened before he got there or while he was there and that it was something that would pass over. If I had not, do you suppose I'd have wondered at your long silence? That really troubled me. I did know you were coming to DC or that you had been there, which I now don't recall. I had some conversation with Jim about this and he said something to the effect that you had but the one day, had to return the same day, no more. There was not then any mention of this disaster. Jim may have assumed I knew about the nature of the accident.

At the end of our conversation I mentioned Arch, as you may remember, and that reminded me about this conversation with Bob, at the CTIA offices. I am without doubt that if I had had the slightest idea of its seriousness and permanence I would have written you, would have not wondered about your silence.

Words seem so cold and indifferent in the face of such tragedies one hesitates to use them. I liked both your boys, and your mother's complaints against them did not make them appear to me to be other than very decent young men whose worst affliction is the society in which they live, something not of their creation. I do hope the future is less bleak than you indicate. And I do hope Buck will find some of your inner toughness. Mary, watch him carefully and see if you can find any signs of a guilt feeling. I fear that he may have or develop something of the sort. Whether or not it would be justified, and I don't really think it would be, it would be hurtufl to him and to all of you. The fault of the world is not Buck's, either, and he should not assume it. It is not really the fault of parents when the young people today turn off on the world. It is society they can't tolerate, whether or not they understand it. What could Buck say, for example, that could persuade two bright boys that there is something right and decent about burning women and kids in Vietnam, or wasting the national wealth and inheritance on such evil? Don't let him feel guilty. He isn't. If I sized him up correctly, he might. You are the one person I know will bear up. How you do I can't understand, but you do and you will.

You know, we looked forward to your and Buck coming in the Spring, as Buck said, coming up the Shenandoah (aka locally as Shinedough-ah), and then we heard that Buck's rupture had opened. If the opportunity presents itself, please both try to fly up. You can both use an escape from such pressing and seemingly endless problems and we'd like it. You know how Lil took to you. And it would blow Buck's mind to see what I was looking at when we spoke and the same thing with different characters now, wild rabbits playing from five to 15 feet from me, in the carport and nibbling near it. It will rlear him to see that bass will come and to the surface when they hear the voice, will walk along the edge of the pond as we walk, and will take feed when thrown...The catalogue of crimes and sins laid to me is too long to expiate in a single letter. You'll hear them in time and make your own appraisal.

I am positive that Ross Ralston told me he had to go to Minneapolis the next day. He told me something Ned Crosby had told him in Howard's presence and I asked him to see Gary and have Gary get confirmation from Ned because it was a clear breaking of the contract I had withNed. He said he wouldn't be able to because he had to go right home. That he went right to Dallas is a surprise. I never met him until the 13th, when I took Lil to the dentist. He came here the 14th. Howard was with me when I drove him to the bus. Best to all,